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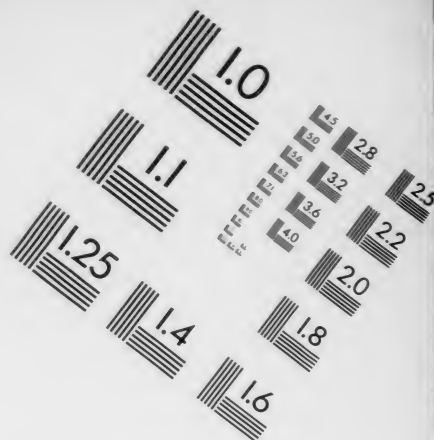
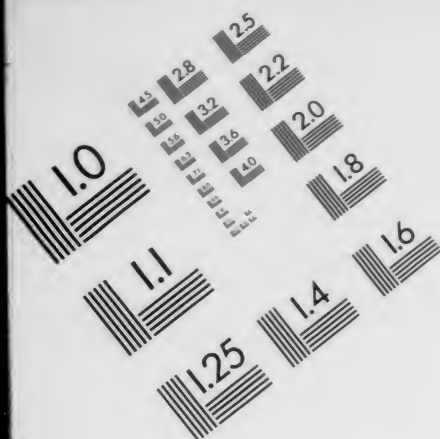


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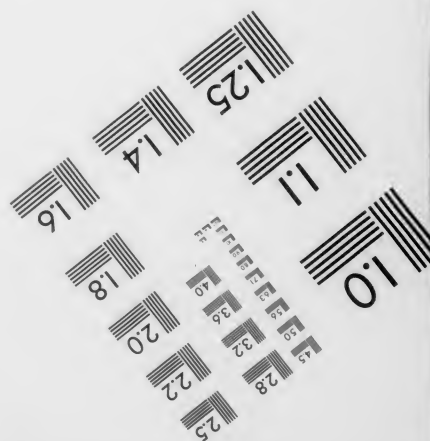
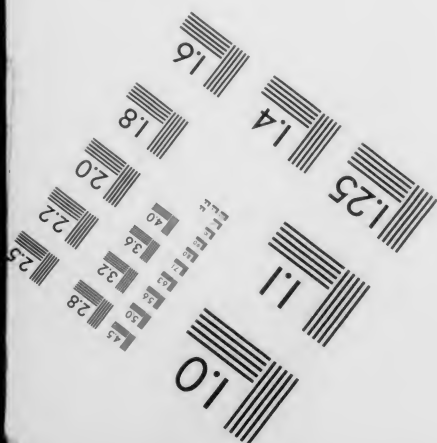
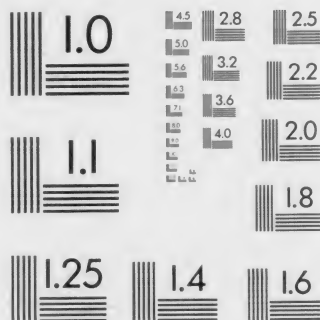
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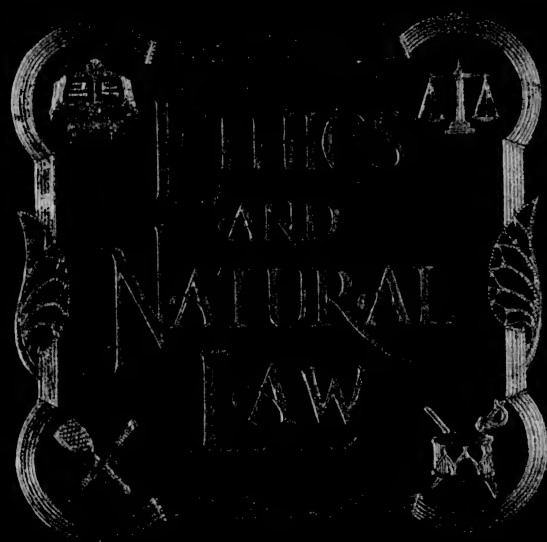
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# Ethics and Natural Law

A Reconstructive Review of Moral Philosophy  
Applied to the Rational Art of Living

By

George Lansing Raymond, L.H.D.

Professor of Oratory in Williams College, 1874-1881; of Oratory and Æsthetic Criticism, Princeton University, 1880-1893; of Æsthetics, Princeton University, 1893-1905; of Æsthetics, George Washington University, 1905-1912.



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TO THE MEMORY OF  
MARK HOPKINS  
TEACHER OF MENTAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN WILLIAMS COLLEGE  
1830-1887

The American Socrates who, probing the resources of thought in the minds of his pupils, guided them of themselves, as it were, to discover, put together, and complete conceptions as nearly harmonious as possible concerning the power and purpose of life in all its relations to themselves, their fellows, their country, and their God; with treasured recollections of processes of thinking illustrated by him for nine hours a week during an entire College year, while all whom he instructed were alert with interest, and many were frequently thrilled as rarely by the cumulative effects of any other form of eloquence, this excursion into the field of applied ethics which this great educator had made peculiarly his own is gratefully

DEDICATED

## PREFACE

THE principles of ethics have been discussed in many comprehensive volumes. A new discussion cannot be attempted without causing the intelligent reader to ask why it is needed. Without referring to other reasons, a sufficient answer to this may be found in the fact that the war just closing has directed attention, as, perhaps, nothing before ever has, to the influence upon public sentiment and private character of certain ethical theories; and, in connection with this, to the importance of making, if possible, a more careful study than has hitherto been attempted of the practical effects of all such theories. It has come to be recognized more universally than up to this time has been the case, that none of these can be supposed to have merely a speculative or philosophic value. A reconstructive review of them, therefore, in accordance with this conception of their influence seems necessarily suggested, if not demanded.

To recall the facts with reference to the origin and development of the conception, the reader needs merely to be reminded that there has been no charitable way of explaining the alarming innovations in warfare and government which have been adopted in Germany and Russia except by attributing them less to the inherent nature of their inhabitants than to false opinions inculcated among them for many years through educational training and popular literature. Through only such agencies could whole communities have been induced to believe that the state is the source of moral authority, and that, in case of conflict between it and individual opinion and conscience, the latter must invariably be made to yield, even if this involve such clear violations of the principles of individual moral sense as are manifested in the worst results of warfare.

In Germany, the extent to which the theory that a man's

first duty is to obey the dictates of someone at the head of the state, or of some official representing him, had been accepted by even the most intelligent people was shown early in the war by ninety-three of its foremost university professors who signed a statement with reference to the causes of the conflict, and to the methods of conducting it in Belgium which few, if any of them, could have had opportunity to verify, and which, subsequently, was proved to be false. How could men with previous high reputations as historians and teachers of ethics have been induced to exhibit themselves as victims of one of the worst effects of national tyranny? How could they have been made to convict themselves of being either willing to swear to what was false, or afraid to keep silence? The only reason which can be conceived for this is that the evil spirit of which, to use the language of Scripture, they were temporarily possessed, was in some way connected with a false ethical theory with reference to the relation of the state to its own people and to those of other nationalities.

As for the Russians, their acceptance of a similar theory was manifested by what happened when the Czar who was at the head of their church as well as state was removed. After the people had lost him, many of them seem to have lost everything that had the slightest influence in the direction of morality. Apparently, in some communities almost every man who owned a gun and nothing else went shooting for his neighbor and his neighbor's property; or, if, now and then, he did consider the rights of others, these were those alone of his own class, working for whom he could have the gratification of feeling that he was really working for himself. Toward persons of other classes, he manifested still less courtesy, consideration, helpfulness, sympathy, to say nothing about truthfulness, justice, rationality, self-denial, and self-control, than had the official autocrat whom the revolution had removed.

How much better, the reader is probably now inclined to exclaim, are the conceptions and characteristics of the people of our own country! But are they so much better? Or do we merely imagine that they are so because the facts with reference to them have been more or less concealed? Let us recall how close is the connection, in these days, between other countries and our own; and how inevitably any thought originated in one of them is communicated to all.

President R. B. Hayes once, in referring to a fortunate diplomatic escape, aptly quoted to the author the well-known saying that "a merciful Providence seems to take care of children, drunken people, and the United States." A few years ago, many of our keenest thinkers feared that we were drifting toward a national moral collapse not exactly the same in form but as threatening in disastrous effects as that which has overtaken some of the peoples of Europe. Now, at last, many think that they have reason to hope that this danger may be averted because of the lessons taught through what has been experienced in this war.

The fundamental causes of the conditions revealed by it so far as they are moral, which are the only ones that concern us at present, are all connected with a single conception, which, in a general way, may be termed materialistic. To perceive what is meant by this term, let us analyze it a little. As we do so, we shall find three of its constituent elements particularly prominent. The first traces the source of morality to that which is external to the man, not internal. This explains why the conception identifies it with the decrees of the rulers or other officials of the state. It is because these are the representatives of the state's external organization. The second attributes promotion of morality to exercise of physical rather than psychical force. This explains why the conception is associated with the effects of militarism. The third associates the object of morality with bodily or practical, not mental or ideal betterment. This explains why the test of its efficiency is supposed to be afforded by an increase in a nation's or an individual's financial, commercial, or landed possessions.

Thus analyzed, it is easy to perceive that every phase of the general conception is at variance with certain fundamental principles that underlie our own country's institutions. According to these principles, moral actions, as proved by the fact that they are not attributable to a lower animal, are traceable to a man's individual rationality—to what is within himself; or to conform this statement to the title of this book—to what he has been made to be through the operation of natural law. For this reason too such actions are legitimately influenced by only one thing,—not physical force but psychical truth; and for this reason, too, they result not in an increase of material bodily possessions but in ability to subordinate all possessions to the

control and purposes of the higher intelligent nature. So far, therefore, as moral conditions can be judged by the theory of which they are expressions, it would seem that we have reason to claim superiority for our own country. But do all our country's people accept the theories that have been stated, and conform their actions to them?

A professor in a prominent American theological seminary was removed from his position a year or two ago because of his expression of views supposed to indicate loyalty, not to our own nation, but to nations with which ours was at war. Long before the war, however, the same professor, in the presence of the author, had defended the sabotage methods of the English suffragettes—in other words, the obtaining of a political and legislative end through the use of physical force. Is it too much to say that, in defending this method, he had already manifested disloyalty of feeling toward the principles at the basis of our institutions? No matter how desirable a change in laws may be, no reform, in a republic like ours, can begin to be as desirable as faith in human reason, and in truth as the chief and, usually, the only appropriate agency to be used in causing the reform. Truth is evidently never so regarded when there is resort to methods of controlling opinion or action that are not in their nature psychical. In cases of riot, rebellion, or war, physical force must sometimes be resisted by physical force. But otherwise brickbats, bludgeons, bonfires, bullets, or even ballots, if the latter be aimed at intimidating and suppressing the rational promptings of the mind on the part of voters or legislators, are not needed; but only a change in the opinions of individual citizens. These vote for the law-makers, and, therefore, more or less control the law-makers' actions. As a rule, men's opinions are appropriately altered partly by personal experience and association with others, and partly by arguments presented in books, magazines, newspapers, or public addresses. After this effect has been produced, a similar effect will also be produced upon the legislators for whom the majority vote. Moreover, because conforming to the opinions of people in general, laws so occasioned will be obeyed without need of any great effort to enforce them. This is one reason why the constitution of the United States prescribes certain subjects concerning which laws can be passed by only the Congress at Washington; and certain other subjects concerning which laws can

be passed by only the State legislatures. In a country as large as ours, those living in one section often demand laws of which those living in another section have no need, and frequently disapprove. Certain occurrences illustrating both the advantages and the disadvantages of this constitutional provision are mentioned in Chapter XXI of the present volume.

Of course, one who acknowledges the principles just stated and accepts truth as the sole or main weapon through which to attain political results, must, with it, often exercise patience, content to wait until his adversaries have had time to think and reconstruct their conceptions. But this is something that the most elementary forms of courtesy and respect for others and for their opinions ought of themselves to incline him to do. Much more should he do this in a country whose whole form of government is based upon faith in human nature and in the workings of the human mind. An American ought to be in sufficient sympathy with this faith to believe that all that is necessary in order to induce the majority of people to think and to act in accordance with right is a persistent presentation to them of the facts of a case and of inferences legitimately derived from them. When success has crowned effort thus pursued, its effects are well-nigh certain to prove comprehensive and permanent. Nothing is so difficult to reverse as public sentiment that is a result of ample instruction and deliberate reflection.

Disbelief in the effectiveness of these two latter agencies is largely owing in our country, as in Germany, to the attributing of such moral influence as can thwart and end vice and crime to the enactments of the state. It is for this reason that many with the highest intentions have welcomed any methods, no matter how contrary to the spirit or even to the letter of our form of government, through which, as they have supposed, their wishes as expressed in their votes can be immediately transmuted into legal statutes. The error of their conception consists not in its ascribing a certain degree of influence to the action of the state, but in ascribing to it predominant and exclusive influence. Impersonal public enactments have nothing in themselves alone that can prove corrective of personal character. It is only the influence and example of other persons, mainly in the family, the school, the business, and the church, but sometimes also in the state, that is capable, as a rule, of inspiring to higher

and nobler effort. Few more debasing conditions could be found than in more than one State in our country in which a law is supposed to have been framed so as entirely to abolish them. See note on page 285 of this volume.

The failure of such laws to do what is expected of them is owing in part, as has been intimated, to the attributing of morality to material influences, but it is owing also to a false conception with reference to the aims of morality, and therefore to the end toward which these laws should be directed. Apparently, large numbers of people suppose them intended to influence merely the material conditions and environments of those for whose benefit they are enacted. This opinion seems to be quite general among those who emphasize the socialistic side of work among the masses. It may be ascribed to some even of those engaged in that kindly, humane, and self-denying form of service that is termed settlement-work—the settlement of educated, refined men and women in a slum neighborhood of a city with the object of associating with the families surrounding them, and, through example and instruction, stimulating and leading them to more intelligent, industrious, clean, refined, and enjoyable modes of life. There is no doubt that some, even of these workers, have directed their attention too exclusively to bodily and material betterment, and, in doing so, have forgotten the mental and the spiritual. Some of them have gone so far—one or two occasionally in practice, but more in theory—as virtually to emancipate themselves and their closest followers from what they consider mere conventionalities of society and church; but which are really the best methods yet discovered through which physical conditions can be made to have a molding influence upon psychical possibilities. The purely socialistic conception of all forms of benevolent work is too apt to put the cart before the horse; to assign supreme importance to that which is merely the husk, the form, the appearance of morality; and to overlook or, at least, underrate that which constitutes its kernel, its spirit, its essence of life.

The most unfortunate result of this view is that, to those who accept it, the whole object of life—that which explains it—remains unperceived and therefore unsought. As a fact, it is impossible to emancipate a human being from the restraints of material surroundings. All his efforts to do this, or any other person's efforts to do it for him, can

merely, even when most successful, change the form in which these restraints are manifested. As a fact, too, he ought not to be emancipated from them. He needs them. He must have them. Otherwise his higher nature cannot be developed as it should be. It becomes him, therefore, in any country in which the restraints have been proved to be less irksome than in others, to be profoundly thankful that this is so; to guard sacredly such rights as he already possesses, and to welcome changes in the methods of society or state so far only as it can be made clear that they will further the facility with which the individual can give expression, in word or deed, to those promptings within him which, for reasons to be unfolded in this volume are always, at one and the same time, the most in accordance with his own highest desires and with the greatest good of others.

Enough has been said in this preface to suggest to those interested in the subject why it is that the author has thought it desirable to re-examine the philosophical bases of ethics, together with some of their more important practical applications. Notwithstanding the very valuable work that has been done in this department, circumstances have changed, and additional discussion seems to be needed. This is especially true as applied to certain theories that have only recently attracted particular attention. But it is also true of others that have been discussed for years but are beginning now to be viewed in new relations. Take *institutionism*, for instance, which is exemplified in the German conception of morality as determined by the state. This conception is too narrow. It leaves out that which is determined, and ought to be determined, by other conditions, especially by those that concern the individual. Or take such theories as have been termed *intuitionist*, *emotional*, *instinctive*, *teleological*, *utilitarian*, *hedonistic*, or such aims of ethical action as have been associated with *altruism*, *universal welfare*, *the greatest happiness of the greatest number*, *benevolence*, *sympathy*, *love* or *the highest form of self-realization*. A man might aim at what he might consider the most important of these, and yet scarcely attain that which would make him a useful enough citizen to keep him out of a poor-house. There seem to be in them all more or less evidences of a lack of thorough analysis. Of course, the same accusation is likely to be made against any theory, and, therefore, against that presented in this volume. At the present time,



it is most likely to be made by those who have become interested in the results of the study of physiological psychology. These certainly have something to do with the conditions underlying ethics. Why, therefore, has this subject not been more fully discussed in these pages? There are two reasons. The first is the present indeterminate character of these results. This is acknowledged even by those who think themselves justified, as all do not, in arguing that conditions have been considerably changed since Professor William James (1842-1910) of Harvard University said, in the epilogue of his *Psychology* that the results give us only "a string of raw facts, a little gossip, and . . . a strong prejudice that we have states of mind, but not a single law in the sense in which physics show us laws." The other reason is that, according to the theory presented in this book, the features that are distinctive of ethics do not begin to exert their influence until after those distinctive of psychophysics have, so to speak, been ended. The latter have to do with the methods through which certain physical elements and instrumentalities of thinking are derived and combined into psychical results. Ethics has to do with the effects of certain completed psychical results after they have assumed the form of definite tendencies and conceptions. Even then, moreover, according to the theory that this book has been written to emphasize, the ethical results are not connected with the psycho-physical processes by way of derivation from them or development through them, but by way of antagonism and counteraction. This is a condition not disputed but admitted by such forerunners of physiological psychology as Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley (see pages 98, 99). None of them deny an ethical interference attributable to an *a priori* influence. Huxley, for instance, says in his essay on "Evolution and Ethics" that "the practice of that which is ethically best . . . involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that"—meaning evidently *the survival of the fittest*—"which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence." Yet what evolutionist has ever propounded a theory that can fully account for this condition? Is it not justifiable to say that, as applied to ethics, a theory thus defective indicates a lack of thorough analysis?

Perhaps it may not be out of place to add here that the analogies between ethical results in character and those of

harmony in æsthetics which are brought out near the close of the more theoretic part of this discussion were suggested by an expression of some anonymous journalist describing in 1876 the author's father, B. W. Raymond (1801-1883) who was a prominent merchant and mayor of Chicago. "The whole aspect," it was said, "is that of harmony . . . of character." The conception developed from this suggestion is that the ethical, wherever manifested, begins in the individual—in the inner and conscious harmony produced by desires having their source in his mind, when they are balancing and, if need be, subordinating but not suppressing desires having their source in his body; and that it is to this internal experience in the individual that we must trace all such external relations as can be rightly termed harmonious, whether manifested between one or more individuals, or between collections of individuals, as in nations.

In connection with this conception, the most important moral agency is proved philosophically to be that which almost all people who are not philosophers have in all ages believed it to be—namely, conscience. Whether restraining from evil or impelling to good, all the functions of this are shown to be comprehended in a consciousness of conflict between the body's desire and the mind's desire. As indicated by an examination of the natural action of each of these desires, it is shown that the former necessarily seeks satisfaction in obtaining that which gratifies oneself alone, no two persons, for instance, being able to eat or to drink exactly the same thing. On the contrary, the latter desire necessarily seeks satisfaction in obtaining that which, at the same time, can be gratifying to another. Whatever ministers to the mental nature, as is suggested even by the anatomy of the brain, comes through the eyes and ears, and that which is apprehended through these need never be the exclusive possession of one person. Scenery, music, poetry, argument, truth can all be enjoyed to the full by one who is sharing them with others. Naturally, therefore, the body's desire tends toward the irrational, the animal, and the selfish and the mind's desire toward the rational, the humane, and the non-selfish. In itself, however, neither of the two is necessarily moral or immoral. The gratification of both is needed for the continuance of human life. That which connects them with morality is the impossibility



occasionally of gratifying desires of each kind at one and the same time. Then the two conflict. One becomes aware of this fact through conscience. Its function is to direct thought to a condition of discord not harmony within one's own nature; and, in some instances, it continues to do this until the man has recognized, that, in the case presented for his consideration, bodily desire should be made to accord and harmonize with mental desire—a result that can be attained through any agencies or methods connected with the mind that are capable of giving it an influence sufficient to accomplish this purpose.

The trend of thought thus indicated might be supposed by some readers to be incomplete, because, after applying the principles unfolded to the relations of the individual to family, school, society, industry, bargaining, employment, and government, no mention is made of religion. But this is in accordance with a deliberate intention. Dr. S. S. Laws (1824 —), formerly President of the University of Missouri, used to make a distinction between ethics and religion, to the effect that the former has to do with duties that grow out of relations which the moral agent sustains to other finite agents; and the latter to those that he sustains to God; or to put it differently, that the former has to do with conduct as related to present life on earth, and the latter as related to future life beyond the earth. According to either statement, a consideration of religion is not necessary to the completion of a discussion upon ethics alone. For other reasons, too, it seems wise to omit any reference to forms of religion in this volume. Only by such a course does it seem possible to enable it to accomplish all the purposes for which it was designed. Among the countrymen of the author who must constitute his constituency are Catholics, Protestants of many different sects, Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Theosophists, Hebrews, Mormons, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Confucianists, and the adherents of many other forms of religion. The time may come when what is written here may be needed as an aid to instruction among the young. No textbook should contain material tending to undermine the religious beliefs of any families represented by pupils in either public or private schools or colleges. The time also may come when the book may be needed on account of the influence which it seems fitted to exert upon mature minds. It is exceedingly

important in a great country like ours to have the people accept, as applied to family, school, society, business, and government, a single standard or like standards of morals. But how can adherents of different religions or forms of religion be expected to accept these standards unless it be made clear to them that, in doing so, they are not accepting a single religion, or form of religion? And how can this be made clear to them? How else, if an author have argued for universal acceptance of his standards, than by his own action in setting an example of not applying them to religion, but leaving the adherents of each religion free to make their applications for themselves?

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that a book which, for the reasons just mentioned, avoids religious controversy cannot have an effect upon religious life, and upon all forms of it, whether considered in their relations to theory, or to practice. Just as a man's moral nature is based and conditioned upon his mental nature—the nature that differentiates him from the brute—so his religious nature is based and conditioned upon his moral nature. In the degree in which he has right ideas with reference to morality, he will have right ideas with reference to that which is fundamental in religion. Take, for instance, the conception, in this book, of desire as lying at the basis of all thought and action; or of higher desire as often struggling against lower desire; or of the necessity in case of conflict of not allowing this latter desire to outweigh the former; or of the peace of conscience that attends the harmony produced when this result is obtained; or of the mental ideal that inspires toward the realization of this harmony; or of the spiritual life that is reached and possessed by him who experiences this realization—is it possible to avoid perceiving that all these prepare a man for the acceptance of religious conceptions? What could be more religious than the complete recognition of the obligation resting upon the only being in the world distinctively characterized by the possession of mind never to allow influences having their sources in this to be outweighed by those having their sources merely in the body? If a man, when the temptations and troubles incident to physical conditions assail his higher nature, treat them as the successful mariner does the winds and waves upon an ocean, he may make them all instrumental in furthering his own progress. But, if he

act otherwise, if he do nothing to resist and master them, he will make no progress and probably will be overwhelmed and lost; or if his life be not lost, it will be devoid of experiences that would have made it much better worth the living. The ocean never appears so grand and beautiful, so exhilarating and enjoyable, as it does to the mariner who is conscious of holding in subjection all the elements of a storm and of using them to speed his vessel upon its course. And so with the spirit of man when confronted by material obstacles. One never appreciates the grandeur and beauty of the physical world as he does when he is inspired by a realization of the importance and dignity of his own destiny in view of the number and magnitude of the forces that are at work on every side of him, and which it is his privilege to master, and, having done so, to turn into that which shall contribute toward his own psychical advancement.

The ancient astrologers, accepting what they considered to be the testimony of their own consciousness, adopted the theory that every man is at the center of the universe. They found it impossible not to conceive this to be the case, —not to conceive of the universe as extending as far below them as above them, as far to one side of them as to the other side. Therefore they concluded that a man's mind which constituted his psychical self was influenced not only by his own body which constituted his physical self, but by everything in the world with which this body could be physically connected, even by that which is in the heavens above the world—in other words, that his whole character and career were influenced by everything in the physical universe of which he conceived of himself as the center. This ancient astronomer, whatever may be thought of the details of his theory, had, certainly, a general conception that was suggestive and sublime. Just as every wheel whirling in a flour mill exerts an influence upon every granule of the product that the mill turns out, so, as he conceived, does everything that moves about one's individual life, not only in a man's physical body, but, beyond the limits of this, everything in the world, everything below, above, and about the world, all the planets in their courses, have an influence in shaping the destiny of even the least of the living creatures that this mighty revolving machinery of creation is bringing to perfection. According to this theory, which does not differ essentially from that of this volume,

every man is connected with everything; and yet everything can affect him as it should in so far only as it is made by him to serve his mental and spiritual requirements. But to serve these, there is not a valley too wide, a mountain too high, a star too bright, nor a universe too vast. There is a sense in which all these are but partial factors of the environment, the investiture, the embodiment of his single human soul. An ethical system that is capable of including in its outlook a conception like this ought to be thought broad enough not to exclude from its range any consideration needed in order to render it complete.

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